

Testimony to the Appropriations Committee

February 18, 2014

By Lois M. Nitch Parent/Legal Conservator for Andrew J. Puglisi

Testimony: H.B. No. 5030 AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE  
EXPENDITURES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2015.

Thank you Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee for the opportunity to testify this evening.

My son, Andy has cerebral palsy, cortical blindness, and epilepsy and, in the past, behavioral issues, all of which require trained staff to help with his daily living, preparing his meals, giving him his medication, bathing, personal hygiene and making sure he is safe at home and in the community. Let me also tell you what Andy has. He has a group home with his own room a beautiful yard with a deck to enjoy lemonade on his glider in the summer time. He has dedicated staff making sure he is safe, clean and healthy. He has a social life, friends and family over for Birthday parties, BBQ's in the summer and housemates that he shares time with at the dining room table or in front of the T.V. watching a movie or sports. This is his family. Andy has a job working for Valley Nuts and Bolts and does the work at his day site in Torrington. He is so proud of his work and he has not missed one day of work in the past 10 years. Up every morning at 6 looking forward to his day. Andy is healthier, has more self-confidence and takes more pride in himself, all because of the excellent care and programs Oak Hill has provided.

I am very concerned that if the funding (to DDS) is continually cut that his level of care will not be sustained. Oak Hill has already closed some group homes and the hours at the day program have gone from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. to 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. to cut costs. Where are disabled individuals going to go if there are no programs available?

There is a need to come up with a way to serve people with disabilities with the respect they deserve and to work together as a team to use the DDS dollars more efficiently. The continued underfunding of these services is hurting people who have enough to deal with already. Families are struggling to get the help they need to care for their children and as they age this becomes more of a challenge. There is no new money in DDS for residential services and parents who have been on a waiting list have been told there is a waiting list but **nothing to wait for.**

The governor keeps talking about a surplus in Connecticut. How can we have a surplus when there are so many individuals that need care now and in the future. In the State to the State Address the Governor talked about how important our children are and we need to make sure they have a future. What about our children? What kind of future will they have if there are no residential or day programs for them? We have made so many strides in the past 40 years to give individuals with intellectual and developmental disability a better quality of education but **not a better quality of life.**

Returning the cuts to the DDS of 30 million dollars for residential services and the 21 million dollars to day services would be a beginning.

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